



Exploration of the Course Construction of “Public English for Postgraduate” Under the Course-based Ideological and Political Education Guidance in the Digital and Intelligent Era

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Abstract

Course-based ideological and political education constitutes an integral part of the innovation in foreign language teaching reform. In recent years, the enrollment of postgraduate students in China has been increasing annually. However, the research on course-based ideological and political education within public English courses in higher education predominantly centers on the undergraduate level. Based on teaching practice, this article initially delves into the implicit advantages of integrating ideological and political education into the "Public English for Postgraduate" course from the perspective of constructing a content system with ideological and political orientation and the design, implementation, and evaluation of diverse curriculum activities. Subsequently, by integrating the requirements of the country for high-caliber talents, the learning attitudes, and language proficiency of the students, along with the core tenets of the relevant guidelines, it formulates a teaching content framework imbued with ideological and political significance. Moreover, in light of the characteristics of the digital and intelligent era and the cognitive and emotional states of postgraduate students, it undertakes the design and execution of multifaceted teaching activities, organizes and conducts multidimensional teaching evaluations. This comprehensive approach aims to deepen students' ideological and political awareness, foster the internalization of their emotions, and guide their practical applications, thereby more effectively realizing the knowledge, competence, and ideological and political objectives of the course.

Keywords

Course-based Ideological and Political Education; Public English for Postgraduates; Content and Language Integrated Learning; Large Language Models

1. The Necessity and Urgency of Course-based Ideological and Political Education in the Course of "Public English for Postgraduates"

In 2016, China clearly defined the fundamental goal of ideological and political education in colleges and universities at the National Conference on Ideological and Political Work in Colleges and Universities, putting forward both personalized and relatively consistent teaching goals for the teaching of various courses in contemporary colleges and universities.

That is, how to make each course move in the same direction as the ideological and political courses, safeguard one's own section of the canal, and cultivate one's own "responsibility field" based on the characteristics of one's own discipline and course.

The public English courses in colleges and universities play a key role in cultivating students' ideological concepts, cultural awareness, critical thinking ability, and innovative awareness due to their characteristics of "full coverage, large scale, and heavy responsibility" (Wu Yan, 2019). Therefore, since the concept of "Course-based Ideological and Political Education" was put forward, a large number of foreign language educators have actively explored and practiced aspects such as the internal connection between foreign languages and ideological and political education (Yang Jincai, 2020), the excavation of ideological and political elements (Xu Jinfen, 2021), the implementation of ideological and political activities (Ren Qingmei, 2018), and the evaluation of the ideological and political effects (Zhou Limin, 2023). However, looking at all the current research, the research on the theory and practice of ideological and political education in public English courses in the field of higher education mostly focuses on the undergraduate stage of universities, and the attention to the postgraduate stage is obviously insufficient.

It is an undeniable fact that with the continuous improvement and development of China's economic situation and scientific as well as technological level, the country's demand for high-caliber talents has become increasingly urgent. Correspondingly, the scale of postgraduate enrollment has been expanding in recent years, whether the number of enrollments, studying students, graduates, or the annual growth index, it indicates that there is still a long way to go to give play to the actual effects of each course and improve the cultivation quality of master's degree candidates.

In the entire cultivation system of master's degree candidates, the course of "Public English for Postgraduates" is a compulsory course that almost all students of non-English majors have to study after enrollment. The duration of the course varies from 1 to 2 semesters depending on different schools and types of master's degrees. "Public English for Postgraduates" not only has the characteristic of "a wide range of audiences", but also plays a special role in "enlightening" academics and knowledge in the initial stage of master's degree study due to the special and important role of English in academic exchanges.

2. The Content Construction of Course-based Ideological and Political Education in the Course of "Public English for Postgraduates" in the New Era

The implementation of course-based ideological and political education is the core essence of ideological and political education in postgraduate courses. Attention should be paid to the changes in the language and ideological and political abilities of the course recipients. On the basis of fully integrating the coordinated and interactive relationship among the characteristics of learners, social needs, and the curriculum system, the language abilities of students should be strengthened. As course designers and teaching leaders, teachers should coordinate the changes of students and teaching contents from an overall perspective, carry out ideological and political practices, and construct a curriculum system and environment in which knowledge and ideological and political education are integrated and interact with each other.

2.1 The Implicit Function of Public English Course in Ideological and Political Education with the Form of Content and Language Integrated Learning

Content and Language Integrated Learning (abbreviated as "CLIL") is both an educational policy and an educational model that takes into account the dual teaching objectives of subject knowledge and foreign language learning. The cognitive rationales for the teaching and learning of foreign language disciplines also require that languages should be learned and used in certain contexts, and the process of language acquisition also emphasizes the interaction among content, communication, cognition, and culture.

The course "Public English for Postgraduate" takes the Guidelines for the Construction of Course-based Ideological and Political Education in Higher Education (hereinafter referred to as the Guidelines) as the main ideological and political clue and constructs the ideological and political context of the course. Through the content of textbooks, supplementary and expanded relevant ideological and political resources, and the targeted design of teaching activities, students are organized to interact by means of discussion, cooperation, questioning, and debate, combining their own professional backgrounds, knowledge structures, interests, hobbies, and growth experiences. Teachers, as leaders and coordinators, help students deepen their thinking and cognition of the ideological and political clues in multi-dimensional interactions. The knowledge related to ideological and political education constructs a context for language learning, and language, in turn, provides necessary support for the internalization of ideological and political views. Language and knowledge empower each other, improve learning efficiency, promote the in-depth development of ideological and political cognition integrating content and language, and enable students to express their own views in English at the same time, so that the integration of ideological and political education in the public English classroom can be deeply imprinted in students'

minds, subtly guiding the life practices of the course recipients.

2.2 Designing Course-based Ideological and Political Practices by Combining the Five Dimensions of the Guidelines with Teaching Themes and Student Needs, and Achieving the Effect of Fostering Virtues and Cultivating People through the Linkage Inside and Outside of the Classroom

The "Guidelines" clearly put forward that the construction of course-based ideological and political education should optimize the content supply of courses around five dimensions, namely political identity, patriotism, and family affection, cultural literacy, awareness of the Constitution and the rule of law, and moral cultivation, so as to ensure that courses and the cultivation of students move in the same direction.

With the help of course-based ideological and political teaching materials that keep pace with the times to promote the construction and implementation of courses with ideological and political orientation, many colleges and universities are using the textbook *New Explorations in Postgraduate English (Basic Level)* published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press. This textbook has six unit themes, namely Identity, Design, Disease, Survival, Law, and Tomorrow respectively. Through the mutual support of reading and writing, as well as viewing listening, and speaking, it creates an overall appropriate curriculum ideological and political context with language materials that are relevant in content and have different perspectives. Although the teaching themes of each unit are different, digging deeply into the main ideological and political line often involves 2 to 4 ideological and political dimensions in the *Guidelines*.

Take Unit 3 "Disease" as an example. The two articles in the reading and writing textbook respectively introduce the scientific story of Dr. John Snow, who adhered to an evidence-oriented scientific view, overcame difficulties such as professional authority, obvious phenomena, and knowledge limitations, and persevered in finding the origin of cholera. It also illustrates the direct and indirect economic losses caused by diseases around the world every year through cases and data. The two listening texts in the viewing listening and speaking textbook of this unit respectively focus on the misunderstandings about "bacteria" in daily life and the serious impact on residents' health caused by the destruction of the biological chain due to unintentional construction in a certain region of the world. The main clue of ideological and political in this unit is "Disease and Health", and the ideological and political content is expanded from three dimensions: patriotism and family affection, cultural literacy, and moral cultivation.

Among them, the dimension of patriotism and family affection is developed from the perspectives of "dedication" and "integrity" in the core socialism values. By reconstructing the context, we review the medical technology condition during the First Industrial Revolution when Dr. Snow lived, the overall understanding of the academic field at that time, and Dr. Snow's actual living situations in those years to experience his adherence to professional ethics and his investigation of the truth through the innovative and operable method of "disease map". In the dimension of cultural literacy, by telling the Chinese philosophical connotations and practices of traditional Chinese medicine in English and then expanding the innovative and hard-working scientific team led by Tu You-you, the awarding of the Nobel Prize in Medicine by which students can feel the positive impact of traditional Chinese medicine on the world and experience the essence and value of outstanding traditional Chinese culture through vivid examples. In the dimension of moral cultivation, through the key figures in this unit, Dr. Snow and Tu Youyou, the winner of the Nobel Prize in Medicine, combined with the characteristics of the school and historical clues, students are guided to review familiar cases such as the educator Tao Xing-zhi and the architect Li Bing, so that the course recipients can naturally draw conclusions through discussion and the collision of ideas: in terms of adhering to professional ethics and realizing professional ideals, they should be brave enough to step out of their comfort zones and integrate personal pursuits with the needs and development of the motherland.

After class, students are required to study the section on "Antarctica" in the regional culture course "English Talk on Ice and Snow Culture" which was constructed by the teaching team, and feel the dedication and scientific spirit of the scientific expedition team members, and write a work motto for their future selves (ten years later) on the learning platform combined with the after-class group tasks and their personal learning experiences. The excellent works will be used as the pre-class introduction materials for the next unit, that is, Unit 4 "Survival", to carry out the unit teaching with the main ideological and political clue of "Survival, Inheritance and Development". Students' own works become a part of the teaching materials, which stimulates students' attention to the classroom, the depth and breadth of their thinking on the discussion topics, and the degree of refinement of their own works.

2.3 Identify the Cognitive and Psychological Changes of the Students in Different Stages of the Course Implementation, and Conduct the Course-based Ideological and Political Teaching Accordingly, so as to Stimulate Students' Internal Learning Motivation

At the beginning stage of the course, students' adaptability to the course is generally average. However, they have a strong desire to consolidate their English foundation and improve their language proficiency in the new environment and leave

a perfect impression on the teachers and classmates. Therefore, at this stage, their internal drive for language learning is relatively sufficient, but their overall language ability remains at the stage of the postgraduate entrance examination. Some students have been exposed to the English professional literature earlier, while some students have seldom touched English after the master's reexamination. As a result, the participation in classroom activities is relatively high at the beginning of the semester, but there are significant differences in language application abilities.

In the middle of the semester, the students have already adapted to the teaching mode and become familiar with the course requirements, and basically formed their own positioning for this course. At this stage, the differences among students are quite obvious. Students with higher positioning will continue to carry forward the style they adopted at the beginning of the course, that is, pooling ideas by relying on the strength of the team and then continuously optimizing on an individual basis. However, students who aim to pass the exams will just muddle along by taking advantage of the team in terms of individual assignments, classroom interactions and personalized task presentations.

In the later stage of the course, with the approaching of the final exam and the College English Test of Band 6, students show a small peak in their enthusiasm for English learning again. But at this stage, students' focus tends to be on exam-oriented learning rather than on the activities related to open and critical discussions as in the early stage of the course.

The construction of a content system where the course-based ideological and political goals and the characteristics of learners support each other. Based on textbooks, the teaching design is carried out in combination with the changes in students' learning motivation, learning attitudes and learning needs at different stages within the same semester. Ideological and political clues that are interrelated and mutually complementary are developed. The ideological and political resources mainly focus on renewal, supplemented by appropriate overlap. The aim is to guide students to view the same phenomenon in different contexts and try to innovatively re-recognize and consider the repeated ideological and political points through the background of different thematic contents. Moreover, students are enabled to collect the applicable practices of the same ideological and political resources from different perspectives through the different tasks, requirements, and teaching procedures at different stages of the semester.

In addition, due to the natural cross-cultural attribute of the foreign language discipline, the course-based ideological and political content of the public English course is extensive. By making full use of the existing resources, the main ideological and political lines among units are advanced in an intertwined manner. Ideological and political education empowers thinking, and effective language output is achieved, realizing the mutual empowerment and interaction among language, thinking, and education.

3. Multiple Implementations and Evaluations of the Course-based Ideological and Political Education in the " Public English for Postgraduate" Course in the Era of Digital Intelligence

Adjust the teaching content, design teaching activities, and conduct multi-dimensional evaluations of teaching effects according to students' cognitive and emotional changes, so as to make cognition, emotion, and behavior match with each other and achieve the ideological and political goals of the course.

3.1 Design Principle of Exerting the Long-term Influence of Course-based Ideological and Political Education

In order to better play the role of ideological and political education, the course design adheres to the design principle of adapting to the times. It not only focuses on the teaching within classes and in textbooks but also sets teaching activities and tasks of different types and with different participation units (such as individuals, peers, groups, or inviting guests in relevant fields according to tasks) based on students' cognitive levels at different learning stages before class, during class, and after class, as well as their different learning attitudes and enthusiasm at the beginning, middle, and later stages within the same semester, so as to deepen students' cognitive understanding.

On the above basis, open, critical, and innovative topic discussions are carried out to enable students to form emotional attitudes that are based on the mainstream yet with individuality in the process of in-depth thinking and interaction. In daily life and learning, students are able to use the above cognitive understanding and emotional attitudes to guide their personal behaviors. While positively guiding students' emotions, cognition, and behaviors, it also leads students to experience the process of the refinement of critical and innovative thinking by combining the content of course-based ideological and political teaching and applying the target language, laying a foundation for students' future scientific research exploration and innovative practice, so as to realize that the ideological and political effects are both internalized in the mind and manifested in actions.

3.2 Implement Teaching Activities to Construct Students' Independent Course-based Ideological and Political Abilities

Students' cognitive development, learning attitudes, learning interests, and learning needs are processes of dynamic development and change, which have both commonalities and individualities. Comprehensive unit tasks are organized and carried out in view of the content of textbook units, the main ideological and political clues, the ideological and political goals, and the need for the recurrence of key ideological and political points among units.

Groups determine the approximate topics of tasks through discussion according to the requirements of unit tasks. Combining the members' information technology capabilities, they are allowed to use large language models to empower multi-dimensional ideas for the topics, and on this basis, team members integrate, supplement, and expand to determine the themes and characteristics of their own groups. Members can undertake work according to their own interests and strengths, discover or develop their own advantages in continuous communication and interaction, and improve the quality of tasks through mutual consultation and cooperation. In this way, they can not only make harmonious and effective use of the strength of the team but also have an objective and accurate understanding of themselves and have the opportunity to discover and try to learn the extra advantages from others.

3.3 Application Empowerment and Ethical Reflection of Large Language Models

There is no doubt that contemporary postgraduate students are the pioneer group in using large language models in the field of education. Large language models are involved to some extent in all aspects, including pre-class knowledge preparation, in-class critical and innovative discussions, knowledge application, as well as after-class expansive tasks and comprehensive training. Will the use of large language models among postgraduate students exacerbate students' mental laziness? Will it increase the risks to academic integrity? Will it indirectly affect students' interpersonal communication abilities? Concerns about the potential risks and ethics of using large language models are not overstated. However, "the future is already here". Since large language models are irresistible, educators should adapt to the challenge, guide students to clearly understand their underlying logic, clarify the principles of human-machine collaboration, and learn to use them efficiently and empower them appropriately through suitable practice. Based on the above concepts, the course "public English for postgraduate" makes the micro-processes empowered by large language models explicit by designing unit group tasks, optimizing the presentation methods, and conducting multi-dimensional evaluations on the completion quality. Students' information literacy and ethics are improved in the process of using, sharing, interacting and commenting on activities. For example, the comprehensive unit tasks are carried out in the form of mini-academic seminars according to the unit themes and task requirements. In addition to the conventional "task presentation", "action process sharing and discussion" is added to optimize the presentation methods.

The "action process sharing and discussion" demands that prior to the group's task presentation, they should share their original motives concisely when preparing for the task, their anticipations following a brainstorming session, and any prominent issues or alterations during the implementation as a prelude to the report. Subsequently, the conventional "task presentation" is carried out. After the presentation, the "analysis of the action process" is further deepened. This involves demonstrating the specific division of labor during the task execution, ascertaining whether each member has availed themselves of the empowerment provided by large language models, specifying which functions within which large language models were utilized, elucidating how to edit and modify the prompts, explaining how to screen, integrate and process the answers furnished by large language models, and detailing the surprises and deficiencies encountered during usage, as well as the steps and sentiments regarding the improvement directions they anticipate for themselves or for large language models in the future. During the period when members are sharing the empowerment of large language models, other classmates are permitted to interact, share their thoughts, and offer suggestions to the sharer. The audience poses questions regarding details such as task design and presentation, detects problems from the existing materials, engages in profound thinking, and acquires the ability to transfer knowledge, thereby guiding the accomplishment of their own tasks.

The robust growth of China's economy and remarkable progress in science and technology, along with the demand for the overseas spread of Chinese classical culture and advanced technologies, as well as the expansion of the postgraduate enrollment scale by the nation, all jointly signify the pressing need for international high-caliber talents possessing outstanding political acumen and exquisite professional capabilities. "Public English for Postgraduate", being a compulsory public fundamental course, endows students with capabilities via language. It interlinks the ideological and political threads of the course by means of the multi-faceted implementation and assessment of ideological and political elements both within and beyond the curriculum framework. This enables the recipients of the course to enhance their cognitive understanding, internalize their emotional responses, and direct their practical actions, thereby serving the national strategy and maximizing the value and significance of the "Postgraduate Public English" course.

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